

So, Tafi, the master, awoke with the light, But the prentice lad, Buonamico, was young, And his dreaming ears were loath to hear The daybreak bell's awakening tongue.

IV.

For it seemed to speak with old Tafi's voice, "Colors to grind, and the shop to be swept!"
Then, out of his bed, on the bare stone floor,
Poor Buonamico, shivering, crept.

v

Busy all day with his quick young hands,—
Busy his thoughts with a project bold.
"The master will find," he said to himself,
"'T is not well to work in the dark and
the cold!"

VI.

But the master, unheeding the prentice lad, Matched the mosaics fine and quaint; Till his tablets of stone revealed the forms Of Mother and Child, of cherub and saint.

vII

Buonamico, meanwhile, forsook his tasks, And, prying in crevice of wall or ground, With a patience and skill boys only know, Thirty great beetles the truant found. VIII.

As many wax tapers, then, he took — Thirty small tapers (nor less, nor more), And presto! each beetle, clumsy and slow, On its broad black back a candle bore.

Next morning, ere dawn, when Tafi awoke, Ere his lips could frame their usual call, A sight he beheld that froze his veins— An impish procession of tapers small!

Slowly they came, and slowly went (And they seemed to pass through a crack 'neath the door):

So slowly they moved, he counted them all,

less, nor more!

XI.

"Surely, some evil these hands have wrought, That the powers of darkness invade my cell!" And many an Ave

the master said, To reverse and undo the unholy spell.

XII.

When daylight was come, Buonamico he told:

"A good lad ever thou wert, and indeed,

Wise for thy years; and, therefore, speak out,

> And, as best thou canst, this mystery read."

"Ay, that they are," said the master, "no doubt!"

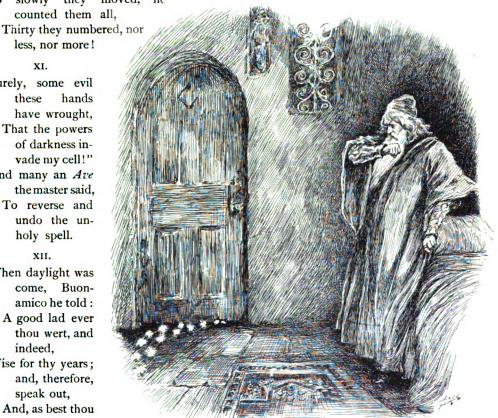
Said the prentice-boy, "Their time is night;

And it may be they like not this wondrous work,

Which thou risest to do ere peep of light!"

"Well hast thou counseled," the master replied,

"So young of years — so sage in thy thought; I will rise no more ere the day hath dawned — A work of light should in light be wrought!"



"A SIGHT HE BEHELD THAT FROZE HIS VEINS-AN IMPISH PROCESSION OF TAPERS SMALL!

"May it not be," Buonamico said, "The powers of darkness that good men hate, Are vexed with my master, who falters not In faithful service, early and late?"

Thus runs the legend, which also saith Spite of his pranks Buonamico became, When the years were fled, and Tafi was gone, A painter who rivaled his master's fame.